



# OPERATION BROKEN HEART TARGETS CHILD PREDATORS

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (OAG ICAC) and Texas law enforcement agencies that have affiliated with the OAG ICAC program recently collaborated with local and federal law enforcement authorities in a month-long, undercover effort to apprehend offenders who use the Internet to target children.

The coordinated statewide initiative known as "Operation Broken Heart" began May 1 and concentrated on arresting offenders who possess, produce or distribute child pornography; engage in commercial and online solicitation of children for sexual purposes; or engage in sex tourism – traveling abroad to sexually abuse foreign children.

OAG ICAC and affiliate agency officers initiated multiple investigations after receiving CyberTipline referrals from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children about suspected predators around the State of Texas. To help identify the potential child predators, OAG ICAC and affiliate agency officers continued their long tradition of collaborating with state, local and federal law enforcement

authorities. OAG ICAC officers and affiliate agency officers executed more than 30 search warrants statewide and arrested 23 suspected child predators.

## **OAG ICAC results**

With outstanding law enforcement assistance from the Midland Police Department, Odessa Police Department and the U.S. Marshals Service, OAG ICAC officers conducted nearly a dozen investigations around the State during Operation Broken Heart – successfully identifying, locating and arresting five suspects on child pornography charges.

OAG ICAC officers confiscated the suspects' computers and various media devices, and all five suspects were taken into custody. The suspects all face charges of child pornography possession. One suspect was found with a mobile phone in his pocket that contained images of child pornography. Three suspects are suspected of sharing images of child pornography on social networking websites. Another suspect was charged with accessing and sharing videos of children being sexually assaulted.

Every day, Texas law enforcement officers who specialize in cyber crimes investigations work tirelessly

to identify and locate potential child sexual predators who target underage victims. The results of Operation Broken Heart in Texas demonstrate that collaboration between state and federal authorities and police and sheriff's departments statewide offers the best pathway to success.

Another key to our unified approach to online cyber safety and child protection is parental involvement. Cyber predators pose a constant and very real threat to young Texans' safety and well-being, so Texas parents must remain vigilant to their children's online activity. June was National Internet Safety Month. Parents must remind their children and teenagers about the potentially dangerous criminals hiding behind seemingly benign online profiles or online advertisements.

Since criminals use today's technology to prey on children, parents should also establish boundaries for kids' mobile phone usage. OAG Cyber Crimes Unit officers have arrested several sexual predators – including some of those taken into custody during the summer sweep – who used wireless devices in an attempt to call or text children. These communications often include sexually

explicit language or images intended to lure children into a sexual encounter. Wireless devices that allow users to surf the Internet may also give children an opportunity to go online and access sexually explicit content, chat rooms and social networking sites without a parent's knowledge.

Texas families seeking more information about cyber safety should access the Attorney General's website at [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov), which includes publications, videos and tips from cyber investigators on making the Internet a safe and valuable tool for families.

Peace officers with questions or requests for investigative assistance should direct their inquiries to our Law Enforcement Liaison, Captain Greg Lucas of the Law Enforcement Division, at (512) 936-1335 or by email at [Gregory.Lucas@texasattorneygeneral.gov](mailto:Gregory.Lucas@texasattorneygeneral.gov).

Child sexual exploitation strikes at the very foundation of our society. OAG ICAC officers look forward to continued collaboration with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to bring child sex offenders to justice.

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